



Rep. Kathy Lambert



2000 Session Review

45th Legislative District

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Spring 2000

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 2000 session offers good news for health care consumers, as lawmakers addressed a number of important issues facing all of us. These new changes should help bring back more consumer choice and safety to our health care system. But following the legislative sessions, lawmakers in the House were still negotiating with the Senate over the budget changes. As of this printing, there was no agreement yet on the state budget. While we would prefer to have completed all our work on time, we feel the budget issues we are fighting for in the budget negotiations are worth the extra effort.

Major budget decisions must be made following the approval of Initiative 695, the measure which cut our license tab taxes to \$30. Funding for transportation improvements and local public safety (items previously paid for by the old motor vehicle excise tax) are hanging in the balance. Many lawmakers, including myself, are working to address these important needs with responsible, long-term solutions using the money we have and without breaking the state spending limit.

My thanks to those of you who communicated and helped with input on many issues during the past four months. It has been a challenging session and input from citizens was tremendously valuable. If you have concerns or questions about the issues addressed this year or other matters related to state government, I would like to hear from you.

It is an honor to serve as your state representative.

Kathy Lambert
State Representative - 45th District

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

I will be holding town hall meetings in the 45th District once a final budget is adopted. Please watch your local paper for details, or check my legislative website at:

**[http://
www.leg.wa.gov/
house/members/
d45_1.htm](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d45_1.htm)**

Click on press releases.



License tab fees to remain at \$30

Lawmakers respond to will of the voters

Initiative 695, the measure approved by voters to reduce car tab fees to \$30, was ruled unconstitutional by King County Judge Robert Alsdorf earlier this year. The judge said the measure violated the requirement that initiatives be limited to one subject. In addition to the tax cut, the measure would have required voter approval of any future state or local tax or fee increase.

Fortunately, lawmakers responded quickly to the ruling. Rather than wait for an appeal to the state Supreme Court, the Legislature reinstated the car tax cut into law simply by passing legislation during the special session.

2000 Session Review

Making a commitment to transportation, public safety

At the core of the supplemental budget debate between the House and the Senate is how the state will restore funding for badly needed transportation projects and local police and fire protection, all of which face funding cuts following the approval of Initiative 695.

In addition to the challenges of responding to Initiative 695, the purpose of adopting a supplemental budget is to make adjustments to our existing two-year budget. Unfortunately, when the 1999-2001 budget was originally adopted last year, many lawmakers did not have any input on the spending decisions. It was jammed through the Legislature by the Senate without public hearings and without negotiations with the House of Representatives. It is vitally important that this year's budget agreement is adopted in keeping with the legislative process to ensure that citizens' voices are heard and that all Washingtonians are represented when decisions are made regarding the use of their tax dollars.

The supplemental budget proposal introduced this year by House GOP lawmakers would reduce spending in the current budget by \$171 million and redirect resources to meet the challenges of I-695 without the need to raise new taxes. With fiscal discipline we showed how the state would be able to restore much of the funding that was cut as a result of I-695 for local law enforcement and fire protection. Below is a table which compares the percentage of local public safety funding that would be restored under each of the original legislative budget proposals.

Local government assistance comparisons

Following is the comparison of the local government funding in each original budget proposal.

PERCENTAGE OF FUNDING RESTORED

	I-695 Impact (\$ in millions)		House Republican Budget Proposal		House Democrat Budget Proposal		Senate Democrat Budget Proposal	
	1999-01	2001-03	1999-01	2001-03	1999-01	2001-03	1999-01	2001-03
Cities:	\$130	\$224	82%	79%	25%	0%	51%	39%
Counties:	\$64	\$109	65%	62%	72%	10%	53%	42%

Transportation needs require commitment

Addressing our state's transportation needs is critical to keeping our economy strong and improving the quality of life for citizens who are spending too much time in their cars and not enough time with their families. The commitment to restoring funding lost due to I-695 for our long-term transportation needs is a key part of the budget negotiations.

The House GOP proposal provided a new ongoing revenue stream that would allow us to embark on a long-term highway improvement program. The proposal would allow us to fund the following local projects:

- Analysis and predesign for I-405 transportation alternatives
- Signal and lane improvements on SR 202 at 228th Avenue
- Intersection improvements on SR 202 at Preston-Fall City Road and SR 203
- Planning study for widening and improvements for SR 202 from SR 522 to NE 85th
- A new roundabout on SR 203 south of Duvall near NE 124th and Novelty Road

Budgets hold the key to worthy local projects

They may not grab headlines, but a number of worthy local service providers are hoping to receive needed funding in the supplemental budgets currently under negotiation. I've been working closely with budget writers to include money for intensive family preservation services and the Friends of Children in Duvall, which is hoping to construct a new facility. Both services provide help for local families at risk. I have been pleased with the response from our budget team in the House of Representatives who have recognized the value of these worthwhile programs, and I hope these programs will be part of the final budget agreement with the Senate.

Health care consumers score big victories

The 2000 session was a good one for families concerned about their health care coverage. Lawmakers approved two major pieces of legislation that will strengthen patients' rights and give consumers more choices in health insurance.

Expanding choices in the insurance market

Because of several failed health care policies in our state, health insurance coverage was becoming more difficult to find, and for some it was impossible. Providers were no longer offering new policies in Washington, leaving about 600,000 people without access to private individual health insurance. This included people who are self-employed, retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare, employees of small businesses that don't offer group coverage for themselves or their family members, and people between jobs. Senate Bill 6067, approved by the legislature this year, will ensure that health insurance will now be available to these individuals and their families.

Patients' Bill of Rights

The Legislature also adopted consumer protection measures that will give patients more rights when dealing with their insurance companies. The centerpiece of this new law is a grievance process for patients when they are unfairly denied coverage for treatment. The new law also requires insurance carriers to disclose the terms of their policies, and makes it easier for individuals to maintain seamless health care coverage when they move, retire or change jobs.

Prescription errors corrected

I prime sponsored a bill that will give the pharmacy board more authority to address and prevent errors in medical prescriptions. House Bill 2798 requires physicians to make prescriptions legible. A study by Washington Poison Centers found that roughly 40 percent of all prescriptions had problems with interpretation. Errors in medication not only add to the cost of health care, they can present serious health risks for patients.

Striving for efficiency through court reforms

I have been focusing my efforts over the last year on bringing fairness and efficiency to our court system. The 2000 session brought progress on a number of fronts.

Helping enforce justice

Under current law, individuals who have outstanding warrants issued by district or municipal courts cannot be held when they are picked up and brought before a judge in a neighboring jurisdiction. The Legislature approved a bill, which I introduced, to establish a pilot program for the statewide processing of warrants issued by local courts. This will bring more law breakers to justice, reduce costs, and make the legal system more efficient.

Hearing the voices of those who care – strengthening families

The Legislature also approved legislation that will allow family members and interested citizens to have a greater voice in decisions regarding the care of juveniles and vulnerable adults. Currently, only the guardian ad litem is allowed to make recommendations to the judge in initial proceedings, leaving other concerned individuals out of the process until trial. My legislation allows the judge to hear the voice of all those who care, so that the best informed decisions can be made for the child or vulnerable adult.

Property tax relief still a priority

There is bipartisan support for tax relief, but lawmakers have not agreed on the final details. I introduced Legislation that would have phased in assessment increases over six years to prevent unexpected spikes in property taxes. Unfortunately, this bill died in committee. I also supported a plan to provide a 10 percent cut in the state property tax for all property owners and a tax exemption of between \$200 and \$500 for low-income senior homeowners. I am hopeful that we can eventually phase out the state portion of the property tax altogether. A meaningful property tax cut this session could be the start of that effort.



Lambert, state representative from the 45th District, is also a public school teacher.

EDUCATION

New teacher competency program approved

Lawmakers approved new teacher testing requirements that will help us reward excellence and attract the most qualified professionals to our classrooms to teach children. The tests will be administered to new teachers to ensure that they have a mastery of the subjects they will be teaching.

I also worked to include funding in our budget that will allow schools to purchase Internet filtering software for computers that are on line. This will allow schools to help protect students from inappropriate material on the Internet when working on school computers.

Unemployment insurance

Benefits extended for laid off Boeing workers


Lawmakers completed several years of work this session by approving reforms to our state's unemployment insurance system. The Legislature approved a bill that restructures the unemployment rates for businesses to make the rates more fair. More importantly, the bill provides additional unemployment benefits for displaced workers who have lost their jobs due to downsizing in the aerospace industry. This will help laid off Boeing workers to gain new skills and re-enter the job market.

Better service sought for mobile home dwellers

Several landlords and mobile home tenants had expressed dissatisfaction with the services of the mobile home affairs office in the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development. An interim working group has been formed to evaluate the office and ensure that an increased level of service is provided to citizens. If you are a landlord or mobile home tenant and have questions, you may receive assistance by calling the mobile home affairs office toll free: 1-800-964-0852. If you continue to experience problems with this office, please report it to my office at (360) 786-7878.

Bringing clarity to your ballot

Have you ever read an initiative or referendum on your ballot and been confused about exactly what you're voting on? You're not alone. Ballot titles often leave voters confused. That's why I worked to get legislation adopted which will clarify ballot measures. House Bill 2587 will create three distinct portions of a ballot title: a subject statement, a concise description, and the question to be decided. The bill also allows any citizen to challenge the title of a ballot if they feel it misrepresents the measure being voted on. Hopefully these changes will help voters feel that they are making more informed decisions on election day.

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